

VZCZCXRO4082
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHAN #0591/01 2470833
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 030833Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1552
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANTANANARIVO 000591

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SPGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ASEC](#) [CN](#)

SUBJECT: Comoran Dialogue Process Stumbles Out Of The Gate

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Following a week of intense negotiations with Union of the Comoros officials and other stakeholders, African Union Special Envoy Madeira succeeded September 1 in achieving an agreement in principle for modalities to set up a preparatory committee for the long-awaited Inter-Comoran Dialogue. END SUMMARY.

International Partners
- - - - -

¶2. (SBU) Members of the international community have met regularly in the last week to align our position regarding the Inter-Comoran Dialogue. The group includes the African Union, United Nations, Arab League, La Francophonie, and biQteral missions of France, China, Libya, South Africa, Madagascar, and the United States. The members adopted the principle that the Comoros must own the dialogue process, lest the international community do all the heavy lifting only to be blamed afterward. In S/E Madeira's words, "we do not impose, but we are not indifferent."

¶3. (SBU) The international partners' starting point is the African Union Inter-Ministerial Declaration of July 8-9, 2007, following meetings in Cape Town, Pretoria, and Addis Ababa to resolve the Anjouan crisis. This document serves as a road map for the inter-Comoran Dialogue, with provisions for reconciliation, discussion of federal authorities ("competences"), the inclusion of stakeholders, and the rationalization of the electoral calendar.

¶4. (SBU) A positive new dynamic in the international meetings is the presence of a member of the UN Political Department's new "Standby Team of Mediation Experts" who has added value in our meetings. With the UN expert and bilateral missions alongside the AU, it appears the group's legitimacy has been enhanced in the eyes of Comoran counterparts. UN ResRep Opia Kumah noted that President Sambi's letter to the UNSYG requesting assistance led to this increased engagement.

Union of the Comoros
- - - - -

¶5. (SBU) In the international partners' initial meeting with Union of the Comoros Vice President Idi and Foreign Minister Jaffar, the GOC's message was clear, "President Sambi will keep his promise to the international community to hold the inter-Comoran dialogue." Reading between the lines, the GOC is proceeding reluctantly given their lack of popularity and weak political position. VP Idi averred, "the institutions we inherited led to the current economic crisis."

¶6. (SBU) The GOC continues to guarantee that the principles of rotating presidency and island autonomy will not be in play during the dialogue. Interestingly, while Union Ministers met three times in the last week with the international partners delivering this kind of assurance, it has been months since they have had direct contact with the island executives or the national assembly on these issues. After much arm-twisting by AU S/E Madeira late the evening of September 1, Union Ministers accepted the notion of convening a small, inclusive preparatory committee for the inter-Comoran dialogue. This committee, composed of Union, Island, and Assembly members will:

- Name the meeting, (i.e. sovereign conference, dialogue, etc.);
- Draft terms of reference;
- Set an agenda;
- Consider participant lists;
- Decide where to convene the meeting;
- Decide when (the Union is aiming for first quarter, 2009);
- Financing needed;
- Format;
- Role of facilitators.

Opposition "Coalition"

- - - - -

¶7. (SBU) The National Assembly President invited the international partners to listen to an "opposition coalition" composed of the Assembly, political parties, local leaders, and island executives of Grande Comore and Moheli on August 29. Their tone was suspicious, insisting the GOC's motive was to prolong Sambi's mandate. Their unanimous position was to reject any discussion of constitutional revisions at an inter-Comoran dialogue, insisting that the 2001 Constitution had never been implemented with the necessary legislation. In their view, the constitution had nothing to do with

ANTANANARI 00000591 002 OF 002

the present crisis, instead they blamed "Union Government incompetence."

¶8. (SBU) S/E Madeira deftly parried their refusal, gaining their approval to participate in the kind of "technical preparatory committee" outlined above. The committee will be just small enough to be effective and just big enough to be legitimate.

Next Steps

- - - - -

¶9. (SBU) The compromise reached was essentially to reactivate the inter-Comoran committee on competences which convened briefly in 2006 and 2007 to consider federal issues of security forces, the judiciary, and management of public enterprises. During September, this small group of Union, island, legislative, political, and civic leaders will address the technical questions in para 6 above. In October, they will publish their proposals to the widest group of Comoran stakeholders for feedback and hold a series of preparatory seminars. The hope is that, with active international partner support, the framework for the inter-Comoran dialogue will emerge and be validated by the end of 2008.

Comment:

- - - - -

¶10. (SBU) The political will for compromise remains weak in the Comoros. The continued engagement of the AU, UN, and interested Embassies - and the implicit threat of consequences for inaction - is the main element keeping this process from falling apart before it begins. End Comment.

MARQUARDT